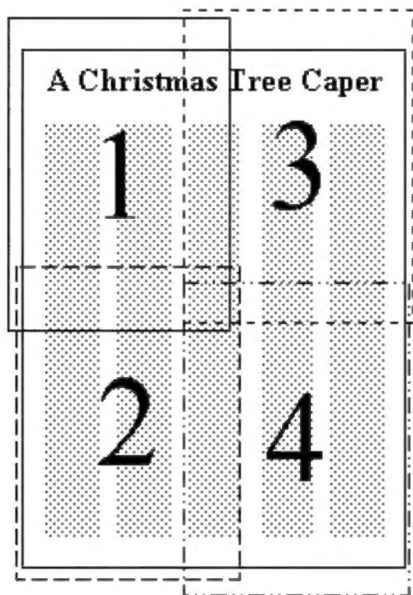


NOTE: This newspaper appearance was divided and enlarged to fill 8 ½" x 11" pages, roughly in the manner shown below.



TERRY

THE RED AIR CONTROL CENTER IS SETTING UP A SEARCH PATTERN FOR THOSE ACCURSED MIG PATROLS.

ONE MOMENT, TERRY... A PATROL IS REPORTING...

HEAVENLY AIRCRAFT WILL INVE



THE \$300 QUESTION

By JACK RITCHIE

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DR. JENNINGS, the Quiz Master, smiled in the direction of the television cameras and then turned back to the two of us.

"You now have \$200," he said. "And you may risk any part of that on the next question." He chuckled. "But of course you realize that the more money the question is worth, the harder it will be."

Miss O'Brien and I both nodded.

"We'll risk \$50," I said.

Miss O'Brien frowned slightly as she looked at me. "We'll take the \$200 question."

Jennings laughed good-naturedly and so did the studio audience. "Now, now, contestants. You'll have to come to some agreement."

Miss O'Brien and I regarded each other stubbornly.

Jennings cleared his throat. "How about \$100? That's a nice round sum."

The audience applauded as Miss O'Brien and I considered the compromise and came to an agreement.

Jennings took a slip of paper from his assistant seated at a desk on the stage. "And now for \$100. Which one of our states was the last to join the union?"

I thought a moment. "Arizona."

COMES TO LAST QUESTION

Miss O'Brien spoke almost at the same instant. "New Mexico," she said firmly.

Jennings glared at him irritably. "Keep out of this, McDougal."

He considered Miss O'Brien and myself for a moment and then turned back to McDougal. "I thought I told you to bring only married couples up here. They always know which one of them is the boss."

"They were sitting next to each other."

"I never saw this MacGregor person before in my life," Miss O'Brien said emphatically.

"The first name is Andrew," I said.

Jennings's eyes went to the moving second hand of the studio clock. "Quiet, everybody! We're on the screen in five seconds."

He managed to smile as he faced the cameras. "And now, once again, we return to our contestants."

He closed his eyes for a second. "You now have \$300. How much . . ." His voice squeaked and he had to start all over. "How much would you care to risk on your last question?"

I thought it over. "I still maintain that 100 is reasonable."

Miss O'Brien's voice was higher than normal. "Reasonable? Don't be an idiot!"

There was considerable applause from the audience.

Jennings spread his hands helplessly and turned to his as-

shers. Then I held up my hand. "Quiet!" I shouted. "Let's have a little quiet in here!"

It took some time to get it, but finally the audience slumped down enough so that I could speak and be heard.

"Very well," I said. "In the interests of peace and quiet, law and order, we'll take the \$300 question."

There was wild cheering for half a minute.

McDougal gazed at me sadly and then handed a slip of paper to Dr. Jennings.

Jennings's voice quavered a bit. "The battle of Gettysburg is considered by many historians to have been the turning point in the Civil War. For \$300, can you give me the name of the commander of the Union forces?"

I sighed gently and looked up at the ceiling.

The seconds ticked away and there was deathly silence. When I looked down at Miss O'Brien, her eyes were stricken.

"I haven't the faintest idea," she said in a small voice.

I shrugged my shoulders. "That's the way it goes."

At the end of another 15 seconds, the buzzer sounded and the audience groaned.

SEEK ABSOLUTELY PERFECT DECEPTION

"I'm sorry, folks," Jennings said. "But your time is up. The answer is General George Meade. However as a consolation prize

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COMES TO LAST QUESTION

Miss O'Brien spoke almost at the same instant. "New Mexico," she said firmly.

Jennings' laugh was a bit forced. "I'm afraid I'll have to insist on one answer between the two of you."

I stared hard at Miss O'Brien. "Arizona, my dear woman."

Her dark blue eyes flashed, but Jennings spoke swiftly. "Arizona is correct, Mr. MacGregor. You now have \$300."

The band played a fanfare and Dr. Jennings ran a hand over his gray hair, leaving it slightly disheveled. "And now we come to your last question."

Miss O'Brien met my eyes defiantly. "Shoot the works."

I folded my arms. "One hundred is the absolute limit."

The audience tittered as Jennings wiped his forehead with a handkerchief. "Two hundred would be a nice compromise," he suggested hopefully.

I shook my head. "Positively no."

Miss O'Brien almost stamped her foot. "The whole \$300 goes on the last question."

We stared at each other coldly as the seconds ticked off.

Jennings was thinking desperately. Finally he turned to the cameras and smiled painfully. "And now for a few words about our sponsor's product."

His smile remained fixed until he was sure the filmed commercial was on the screen and then he turned quickly to the two of us.

"We can't have this," he said sternly. "We just can't."

Miss O'Brien lifted an eyebrow as she studied me. "MacGregor," she said sweetly. "That's Scotch, isn't it?"

"LET'S HAVE A LITTLE QUIET"

"A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush," I said with a trace of smugness.

Dr. Jennings' assistant, a tall, dour man in his late 40's, got to his feet. "The man is right," he said. There was a definite burr in his voice.

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Jennings spread his hands helplessly and turned to his assistant for aid.

"I think," McDougal said calmly. "That we ought to go by the wishes of Mr. MacGregor. It is for the man to decide in matters monetary."

McDougal and I exchanged sober nods of agreement.

"Hold it one long minute!" Miss O'Brien stormed. "It seems to me that I have just as much right as MacGregor to decide this thing."

TRIES TO CHEER MR. MacGREGOR

The audience burst into shouts and applause.

She smiled at the people. "Thank you for your support."

"Over-ruled!" McDougal said sternly. "On with the \$100 question, doctor."

The audience broke into a turmoil of shouting. Dr. Jennings' eyes widened as the noise increased.

I listened objectively to the tumult and studied the nervous

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SEES ABSOLUTELY PERFECT DECEPTION

"I'm sorry, folks," Jennings said. "But your time is up. The answer is General George Meade. However, as a consolation prize, we are going to send each of you one of our sponsor's floor lamps."

When Miss O'Brien and I walked off stage, tears brimmed in her eyes.

"I'm sorry, Mr. MacGregor. It was all my fault for being so stubborn."

I merely looked downcast and said nothing.

She blinked back the tears. "I feel so guilty about it."

I let my shoulders droop. "Perhaps if you had dinner with me tonight, I might feel better."

A glint of suspicion came into her eyes but disappeared just as quickly when she saw absolutely perfect deception.

She patted my hand sympathetically. "All right, Mr. MacGregor. I'll try to cheer you up."

While she was gone for her coat, McDougal came off the stage and approached me. He shook his head sadly. "You were swayed by the whim of the mob."

"Perhaps," I said. "But on the

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other hand Miss O'Brien feels indebted to me. We're having dinner on the strength of that tonight."

He rubbed his chin thoughtfully. "A nice looking girl." He shrugged and took a notebook out of his pocket. "About that lamp. Where do we send it?"

"Andrew M. MacGregor," I said. "1187 Wendt Street. This city."

He wrote it down. "What does the 'M' stand for?"

I hesitated and then cleared my throat. "Meade."

He stared at me. "The general was perhaps a distant relative?"

"Yes," I said meekly.

He pursed his lips. "And it was your reasoning that having her in your debt is better than winning \$600?"

"If we had won," I pointed out, "we would simply have divided the money and said goodbye."

He nodded. "A canny reasoning. Perhaps a good woman is worth \$300. But she'll find out sometime. It'll be a black mark against you."

She did find out about a year later.

But by that time it wasn't very important to the two of us. You can't call off all the wedding because of a little thing like that.

THE END



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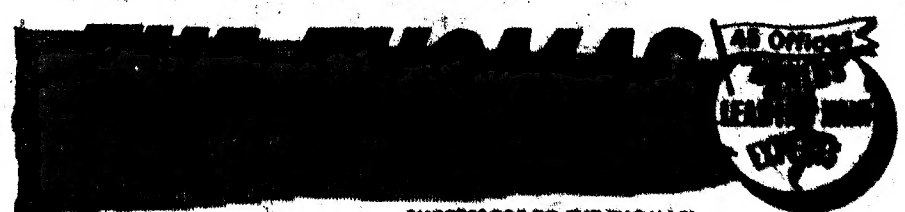
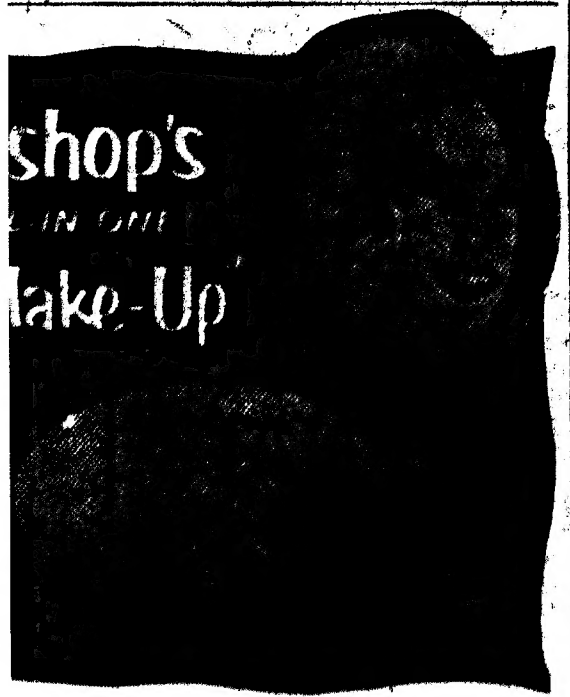


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